

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROVIDES TIPS ON PREVENTING  
INJURY AND ILLNESS AFTER THE STORM**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health reminds residents impacted by the remnants of Tropical Storm Ernesto to take measures to stay healthy after the storm.

“As the waters recede, people in the areas affected by heavy rains and flooding will continue to face a number of health hazards associated with cleanup activities,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

Practicing good hygiene, such as washing your hands, is key to staying healthy in any situation. Floodwaters resulting from the severe weather may harbor disease-causing bacteria and viruses. To help prevent illness, be sure to wash your hands often, especially during cleanup efforts. If your tap water source has been contaminated in any way, use disposable cleaning cloths or hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean. Until your water supply is tested and deemed safe, use only bottled, boiled or treated water to drink, wash your hands, rinse dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food or make ice.

If you lose power, take careful precautions to ensure food safety. To avoid food poisoning, discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture. Just remember, “When in doubt, throw it out!”

Use caution if you use gas-powered appliances and charcoal or gas grills for power and cooking. Improper use of this equipment can lead to serious carbon monoxide poisoning cases and fatalities. Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas and is highly poisonous. Do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace. Never use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home.

Never enter flooded areas or touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet, unless you are certain the power is off. Never touch a downed power line. If clearing or other work must be performed near a downed power line, contact your utility company. Use extreme caution when moving ladders and other equipment near overhead power lines.

More information about how to protect the health of yourself and your family before, during and after a storm can be found at [www.vdh.virginia.gov/weather](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/weather) or the Virginia Department of Emergency Management’s Web site at [www.vaemergency.com](http://www.vaemergency.com).